



Reflections on **Remote Talks: Changes to Economics Seminars During COVID-19**

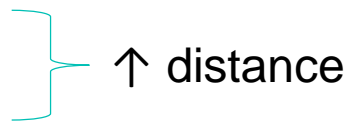
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This paper

- Collects and analyzes a rich dataset of economic seminar speakers (gender, productivity) @270 institutions before/ during COVID (fall 2018 – fall 2022)
- Produces new evidence on the effects of COVID (shift online) on the composition of seminars/ speakers
 - ↓ number of seminars (at lower-ranked institutions)
 - ↑ share of (junior and star) female speakers
 - ↑ share of star speakers (incl journal editors)

↑ distance
- More general take-aways
 - Insights into what shapes seminar series
 - Opportunity to reflect on what seminar series should look like

Seminars (and associated visits) are important

- For the speaker
 - Receive feedback
 - Raise profile
 - Make connections
- For the audience
 - Exposure to research
 - Make connections
 - Role models

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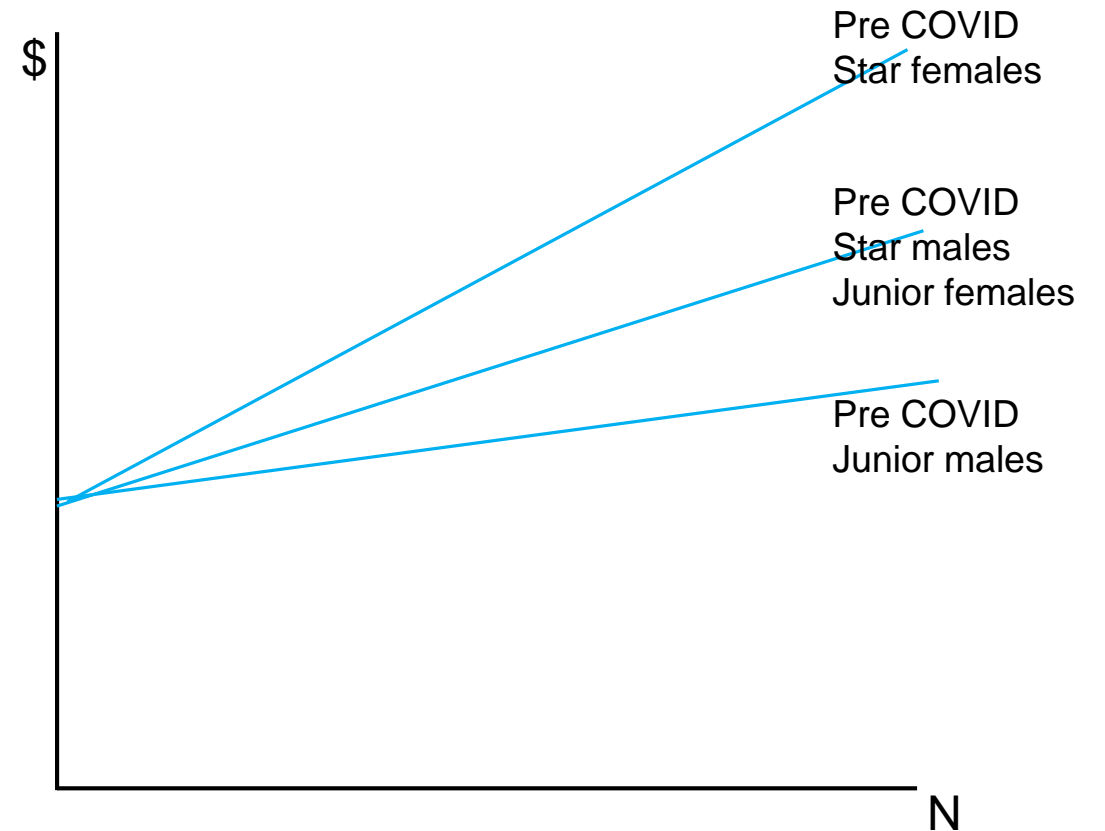
Benefits are greater if
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COVID pandemic changed demand/ supply for speakers

- ↓ demand
 - ↓ benefits
- ↑ (and flattened) supply
 - More so for stars/ female speakers

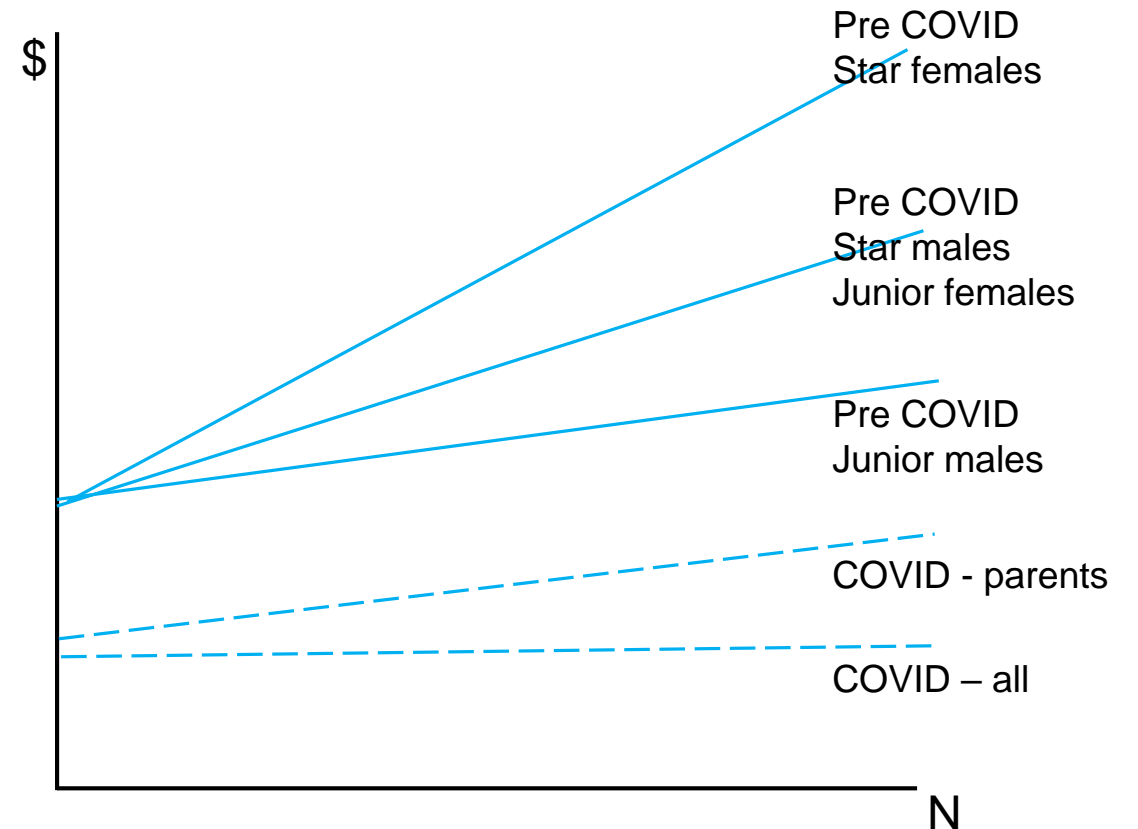
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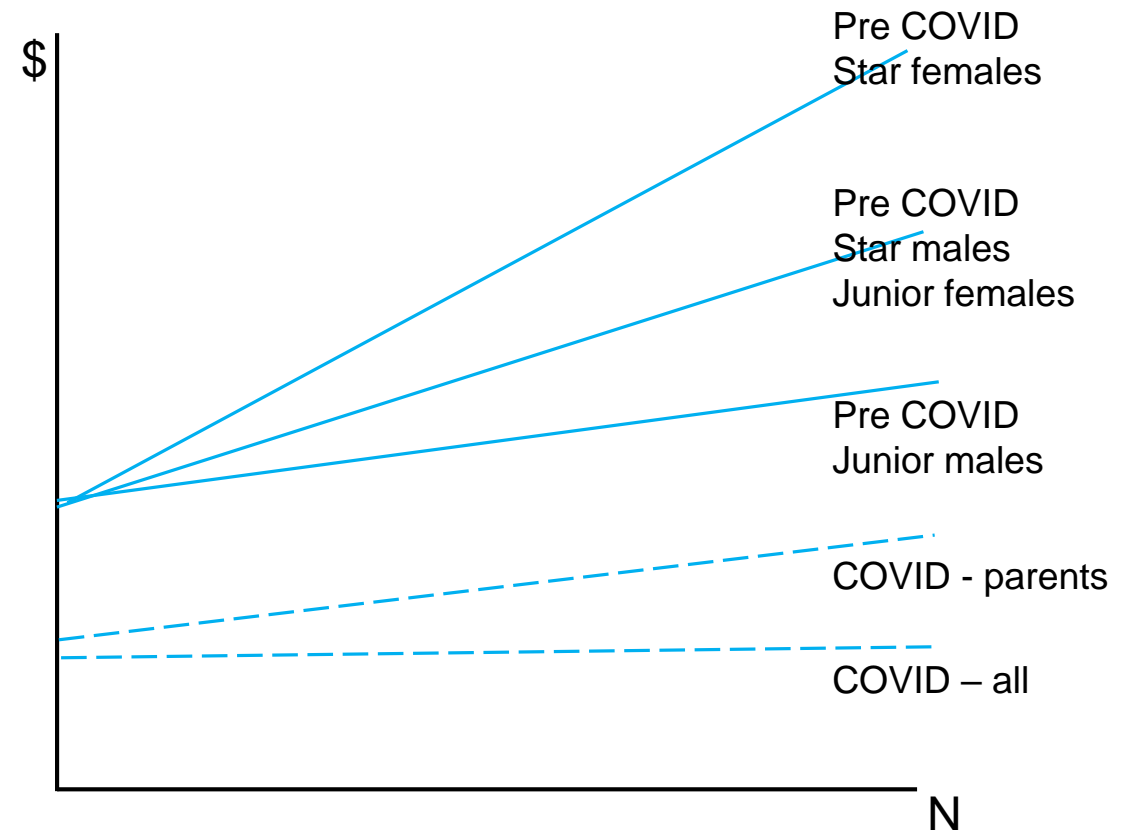
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COVID pandemic changed demand/ supply for speakers

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- Predictions:
 - Ambiguous effect on # seminars
 - ↑ shares of female and star speakers



Insights from the findings

- There are perceived benefits to in-person seminars (over online)
 - ↓ demand dominates ↑ supply → ↓ # seminars
- Departments prioritize own-benefits over speaker-benefits
 - Relaxing constraints → ↑ speakers who are stars/ editors
- Supply-side constraints bind for female speakers
 - Relaxing constraints → ↑ # female speakers
- Departments are conscious of # female speakers
 - ↑ # seminars by junior, as well as star, female speakers

What does an optimal seminar series look like?

“The optimal target for the share of seminar speakers is not the current composition of the profession but the composition we aspire to achieve” (Doleac, Hengel and Pancotti, 2021)

- The mix of juniors/ stars is important, as well as the gender mix
- Female stars may be role models, but junior women benefit directly from being a seminar speaker
 - This group is leaking from the economics pipeline. Known to have smaller networks.
- In an online environment
 - Relaxing supply-side constraints and ↑ share of female speakers is positive
 - But increasing concentration of speakers and ↑ share of stars/ editors is negative
- Market failure? An optimal seminar series (for the profession) would have more junior women (and other under-represented groups), but this is not in individual departments' interests